DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 029 863 TE 001 305

By-Aubrey, G. Olive
Oral and Written Expression--The Early Stages.
Pub Date Dec 67
Note-10p.
Journal Cit-Opinion, The Journal of the South Australian English Teachers' Assn.; v11 n3 p5-13 Dec 1967
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60
Descriptors-Composition (Literary), Creative Ability, Creative Activities, *Creative Expression, Creativity, Kindergarten Children, *Language Development, Oral Communication, *Oral Expression, *Primary Grades, Self Esteem, *Self Expression, Story Telling, Student Development, Student Teacher Relationship, Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Influence, Teaching Methods, Vocabulary Development

A teacher should encourage self-expression, especially in kindergarten and primary students, by creating a sympathetic, free atmosphere in which a student can state in oral or written form his own thoughts in his own way. Self-expression in a student can be developed through his telling about himself, making up stories about pictures, or taking part in word games. If a teacher chooses topics that interest the class, free expression will follow. In all of these activities, the aim is to increase the child's powers of observation and his ability to clarify ideas through analogy. Providing ample practice in oral communication, the teacher is able to increase the student's vocabulary and his confidence in expressing himself. By giving encouragement and showing interest in what is written or composed orally, the teacher can assist the child in developing fluency of expression and an interest in words, while maintaining the freshness and excitement the child experiences when his work is appreciated. If begun in infant grades and developed through primary classes, this teaching approach will produce fluent and interested students at the secondary level. (LH)

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ED029863

Opinion

IS THE JOURNAL OF THE
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
ENGLISH TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION INC.

Editor

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23 Garden Avenue, Burnside
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TE001 305

DECEMBER, 1967 VOLUME 11, No. 3

Oral and Written Expression — The Early Stages

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Creative self-expression is one part of a child's development which allows him to state orally or in written form his own thoughts in his own way. In the school situation his ability to express himself will develop if there is a sympathetic, permissive atmosphere—that is, an atmosphere where the teacher accepts a child's sincere efforts, realizing that, whilst all children are creative, some are more creative than others. It is the teacher's job to encourage independent self-expression.

This does not mean that the best policy is one of laissez-faire. Far from it. At the same time as the teacher is encouraging oral and written communication, he is programming lessons which develop the child's awareness of the techniques which are used by writers; he is programming for teacher and class readings of all forms of literature, and at the same time is following a broad programme of oral expression, wherein children are given opportunity to tell their own experiences real, vicarious, and imagined. At the same time the teacher is helping the child to develop an interest in words—through picture and news talks, through the composition of stories told to their peers, through acting out dramatic situations and through creative play, and the saying of poems and rhymes, where the patterns of the poetry form a magic sound which children learn to love. At the same time as all these skills are developing, the child's experiences with reading and writing form a vital background to his development of an ability to express himself in writing; at the same time as he is developing an ability to communicate orally, he is becoming conversant with the printed word.

All this development is made possible through the child's growing awareness of language. What teachers invariably forget is that children come to school with five years' practice in the use of their mother tongue—five receptive years, during which they have become aware of the sentence patterns which others have used orally, either in everyday speech within their hearing, or in stories or poems which adults read to them. In 1965 I was able to observe the results of a questionnaire given orally to ten children who had just arrived at school—fifteen general knowledge questions asked by students who recorded the results. The newly arrived children's word tally is interesting—the largest word score was 249, whilst the minimum variety was only 59 words. Sentence pattern complexity varied with the child's assessed ability, noted by the teacher, in comparison with his other pupils. Word variety scores by the girls were—234, 174, 161, 135, and 59, whilst the scores of the boys were—249, 230, 164, 103, and 102.

The implication of this small survey appears to be that when most children come to school they have quite an awareness of living language, though their skill in using it varies with the richness or otherwise of their experiences. It is therefore necessary for the teacher to build upon the experiences of his pupils.

The teacher, of course, can never hope to assess the exact scope of a child's vocabulary. It varies so; it is forever a source of surprise to those who hear a child speak and who read what he has to say. The wider a child's vocabulary, the more interesting might we expect his oral and written expression to be. Many interesting studies have been made to assess

factors influencing a child's vocabulary. In the survey which I was able to apply to children with ages varying from five to eleven years I observed the following results from the 5 to 8 years groups:

No. of Children	Age	Variety of Words
16	5	1732
16	6	1482
14	7	1232
15	8	2000

We tend to teach children as though they have almost no language background, whereas even the child with the most limited experience and with a home experience where language use is limited can at least recognize sentence patterns spoken to him.

At the infants' school level the child is most impressionable. Children, in most cases, are accustomed to listening to stories and poems or rhymes being read to them. When, for the first time, they are asked to tell their own, original stories to the class, we can see just how closely they model their form and some of their sentence patterns or phrases upon what they have heard. This is why it is important for the teacher to read the best possible literature to his class.

At the same time, children are imaginative. Thus, whilst some of the stories which are read to them might be related to real experiences, others should be read which appeal to their imaginations.

With such a background, when asked to tell their own stories to their classmates, children are likely to produce some fascinating efforts. It is essential for infant-grade children in particular to be given practice in expressing themselves orally. Everyone is aware of the importance of the news reporting lessons, picture talks, and all kinds of discussions based upon social knowledge and experiences and stories they have heard and to compose stories of their own.

I would like to trace through some of the efforts of a first-grade class, showing their development in skill in telling a story orally and their first efforts at story writing.

LEARNING TO TELL A STORY

From their earliest days, children hear adults tell them a story. If we listen in to them at play we will learn something of their inventiveness. The following are some of the experiences of the first-grade children mentioned above. The lesson was the oral telling of news—as understood by that term in the infants' school. Here are some of the sentences offered:

1. I'm going to Rick's place and I might be able to ride on a big swing.
2. My father's going to Sydney on Friday and he thinks he's got 'flu and if he has, he won't be able to go.
3. Next year we're going to America on a big ship.
4. Tony C.....'s kite got caught up in the telegraph wires and when he looked round it was dead in the gutter.
5. One night when we were asleep our dog ran over the road where they got some of the rabbit poison and he ate some of the rabbit poison and he died.
6. Michael P..... is coming to our place today and we're going to play with my kite if there's enough room.

It will be noticed that even at this young age, children have become accustomed to using quite a complex system of communicating their thoughts to others. Note that the most common sentence pattern, apart from the simple sentence, is that using 'And' or 'But' to put together more than one idea. One child used as many as five clauses in one sentence.

They used adverbial and adjectival clauses. Note the refreshing expression in sentence No. 4, where, for the time being, the kite, formerly alive, lies dead in the gutter. Here is the beginning of refreshing expression which children can be encouraged to use in written work.

The following is a record of a lesson wherein the same children make up stories based on pictures which they are shown:

1. The bees are dancing around in the flowers. The gentle breeze is blowing the flowers **and** I think that the bees want to get some honey **because** they're going to make a pudding **because** they're going to a party **and** they want to make a pudding for a party.
2. They're called "Jumping Jack", **and** this is a Jumping Jack **and** the monkeys are having their dinner **and** the Jumping Jack's down the back **and** there's a cup of tea **and** this one here's saying "Have some of mine."
3. I think those might be daffodils **and** the little boy and girl are getting flowers for their mother **because** they're going to have visitors. The daffodils are in the field.
4. One day we were playing wild Indians **and** I kept getting killed **and** they had to count to one hundred **and** I counted—1, 2, 3, . . . to 100.
5. We're going to the seaside **and** we have to be quiet in the flat **because** there's an old thin wall **and** we're upstairs.
6. I think this is a wood **and** I think this boy is making this elephant . . . **and** Judy and me thought we would call it the Black Forest.

Teacher: Why?
Answer: Oh well, we thought there would be lions and tigers in there too.
Teacher: What do you think the elephant's going to do?
Answer: Build a fire with it or chop it **or** take it home for firewood.

7. Sue and Peter go out into the lovely garden **and** see a beehive **and** Peter runs to catch a bee **and** Sue catches him by the shirt.

Teacher: Why?
Answer: Because the bees might sting him.

These examples will show that whilst some children comment directly about what they see in the pictures they are looking at, others imagine what the situation might be and what the characters seen in the pictures might be doing. Still others launch into their own flights of fancy. Notice that the "and" method of sentence patterning is still the most commonly used way of connecting thoughts. Notice, too, that, in their own descriptions of the pictures, the children can be influenced, even to the names of the characters, by the books they are familiar with—this is especially so in example 7, where the names come from one of their basic readers.

We might imagine from the examples of oral work we have already seen from these children that they would enjoy telling their own stories. To show what children may accomplish at this stage of their developing, I will quote from a taped recording of a freely composed story created by a six-year-old, following the pattern of her own series of drawings done in creatively first. The story composed before this one was about a rocket which took a man up amongst the meteors:

> It's another story now. It's called the sunken steeple and it's about a witch and a little boy and there's many, many jewels and fishes and they're both feeling very hungry and so they both want to get inside before each other, to the little chuff boat. The little witch took the little mermaid—the little green mermaid—and she got down there and the witch doesn't like it and so she sends down the very deadliest lightning to strike him, but he goes up and so the lightning hits the sea and

then she goes to bed and she dreams about the animals and the jewels and all the other things and the little fishes, and her pussy cat wakes her up and tells here it's another day, but when she goes to see the little boy his father gave him a bow and arrow so he could shoot the big, big old witch and did, and so he was the one who got all the jewels and the necklaces and all the fishes.

At school these children had been impressed by stories of witches, so that in their own story composition many of them spoke of witches, too. In these stories, again, there was observed a close influence not only of characters from stories read to them, but also of story form and expressions. I shall quote just one further example. The child is narrating in front of the class:

Once upon a time there was a boy who had a witch for a mother and he was a poor little boy and even had to do housework, and the mother—the witch—didn't have to do anything. She just sat all day, and one day the police heard on the wireless something was around in the forest, so they went out and looked in the forest and they saw a cottage, so they went and they saw a witch outside. She said:

"Who are you?"

"So you're the witch that we've been looking for—we've been looking for you many years ago. We've found you now so we can kill you or take you to gaol—one or the other."

"None of those! You will obey, yourself. I have a magic spell in my mind."

"Then kill right now!"

(Bang!)

"Now, little boy, you have a home, and go and see if you can shoot right in the middle of that moving tiger."

So he had a shot and he got right in the middle, so he could have about two hundred arrows and a bow. So now he lived in a very nice house and had a very nice mother, and everything he wanted, his mother would give him and one day he said to his mother could he go down to the park, and when he went down to the park he saw two girls playing; then he heard a noise (Gr-r-r-r) then he looked around behind him, then he saw some lions and tigers. One of the lions were behind one of the girls, so the lion nearly bit the girl, and the little boy got out his bow and shet the lion as fast as he could, and the little girl didn't get killed at all—just a little scratch on her leg.

Then the girl said "Thank you" to the little boy, and when he grew up, the little girl wanted to marry him, so she did, and they lived happily ever after.'

Psychologists may be interested in this tale, not for its reflection of interests, but because of the equation of the witch with the boy's mother. Coming from a boy, it is interesting also to hear that the little girl wanted to marry the boy in the story and "so she did". The new, kind mother allows the little boy to do all that he wants to do. Small children, in their oral expression, exhibit a keen sense of the dramatic—note the use of conversation and of sound effects. Note how relatively complex are the language patterns used in many of the sentences to convey the narrative.

Apart from a child's recognition and use of these language resources in his creative work, he shows resourcefulness in his use of a rapidly growing vocabulary. His oral vocabulary is more advanced for many years than is his written vocabulary, but, through the provision of ample oral practice in the use of language to communicate thought, the teacher is able to prepare a child for fluent written expression. Through providing numerous ex-

periences the teacher is able to develop not only the child's fluency of oral expression, but also his confidence in expressing himself, his habits of correct pronunciation, and at the same time he sees the child's personality develop.

Five-year-olds, in their vocabulary, show resourcefulness. In the survey previously mentioned, it was noted that even these young children were capable of using colourful descriptive words—like 'raggy', 'twinkling', 'wriggling', 'sloppy', 'mischievous', 'lacy', favourite'. If a teacher is able to carry out a general knowledge survey orally amongst his pupils he will discover many useful facts about their use of words. There will be some indication of the colloquialisms used—some will be colourful, others unacceptable, and he will know what work needs to be included in the usage programme. Children in the survey mentioned used 'mucks up' and 'kids' inappropriately. There were a few baby words—like 'bunny', 'Santy', 'moocow' and 'wolfies', as well as a few indications of a child's ability to use his ingenuity to invent words which will convey his thoughts when he lacks the word needed—like 'sunnytime', 'life-saving house', and 'dog-swimming'. There is something refreshing and quaint in the use of words like 'pointy', 'meltier' and 'limpy.' This freshness of expression needs to be retained in a sympathetic, receptive atmosphere in the classroom, while the teacher provides for developmental vocabulary experiences. This inventiveness of vocabulary, which can be most expressive, is often wiped out if children are over-directed in their written and oral expression.

If the teacher can discover the interests of her class, then it is possible to discuss and write about topics which encourage free expression. At all times strong motivation and discussion are necessary before children write, but a child is able to write more convincingly wherever he can tell of his own experiences or use his imagination.

The following are the first written efforts of the children who had participated in the oral programmes mentioned before:

1. The little yellow duckling is fluffy and soft. The little yellow duck is on the pond. The ducklings take up all the room in the pond.
Early one morning before the roosters made their cockle doo, I crept out. "Mother, father—the snow, the snow!"
2. Early one morning I woke up. I looked out of my window. It was snowing. I went outside. I disappeared to make a snowman. He had a round head and a round body. When the sun came out, it started to melt.
3. I am a bulb. I live in the flower pot. I live in a corner where it is sunny.
4. "David, come here!"
"No mother, I am a snowman."
5. The white snowman melts now. The fire goes up, up, up, and burns all the paper up.
6. I built a snowman on the ground. The snow floated down, down, down to the ground. I built a snowman on the ground. The snowman is melting.
7. Early one morning when I went out, the ground had a white carpet and I said to myself "I will build a snowman."
8. Dad, when will we get the wood for the sparkling fire? We will give Mummy a surprise that the fire is lit.
9. The little yellow duckling has a fluffy coat. The little yellow duckling waddling away down the path. In the morning cool I saw the snow falling down, down on the white grass. When the sun came out the snowman began to melt down, down, down until the grass was green.

10. One morning I went across the road to meet my friends. The snow fell down to the ground. I went with my dollies. I left my dollies on a seat and then I went back home. Then I went to the snow again and built a snowman. I found a hat and a scarf. It was fun in the snow.

If you analyse these efforts, you will see that the sentence pattern which runs Subject, Verb, Object or complement is most commonly used, though there is some evidence of more complex construction. Again, the children show a love of conversation and drama, a love of the sound of repetition of words, powers—especially in the ninth example—of close observation and a feeling for the sounds of words. The teacher can help to develop these last two qualities and also to build a poetic expression through the provision of reading programmes, wherein she reads poems which give clear, interesting word pictures, and where repetition of lines and words and phrases is effective. After discussion, the children write their own poems, or, in the first instance, tell their poems to the teacher, who writes them up in a class book of poems composed by the pupils themselves.

Before the children write their own poems, they need strong motivation which appeals to their powers of observation and to their senses. They hear poems written by children of their own age, too (this is a psychological confidence-building). They see these poems written, if they can read, and then they either dictate to the teacher or write down their own original poetic efforts. While an acquaintance with literature of a high standard helps children to become aware of all that is imaginative and beautiful in our cultural heritage, and whilst young children model their earliest efforts upon the form of the literature which they hear and the style of the language in that literature, there is nothing more encouraging to a child than the presentation of work that is imaginative and interesting, and written by children. When children hear this, it acts both as a confidence-builder and as a stimulus to them to attempt something similar for themselves.

Pictures in words; music played softly as the children write, to establish an atmosphere for writing, pictures shown or painted by the children themselves, a stimulating visit to some place—all these activities encourage children to put into words their personal reactions.

If the child can be encouraged to note the world around him and to describe in words—oral or written—what he sees, sincerely, and in his own refreshing way, amidst an encouraging and developmental climate, then he is more capable of success with his creative writing.

Thought needs to be given to methods of encouraging expression. Exercises, or word games, might be employed to help children to describe what they see in a clear, imaginative manner. Objects may appear in the mind of the listener to a tale, or in the mind of a reader, if they are compared with other objects or persons—for example, the children may have experienced a fall of snow. The teacher may ask them to write down their thoughts or tell them to her. On the class notice board, or in a class story book, something like the following might appear:

HOW THE SNOW LOOKED

It looked like sugar sprinkling from heaven
like fairy flakes
—white cotton wool,
—rose petals falling
—as if the clouds had let fairy floss fall
—like feathers from an eiderdown.

HOW IT FELT

Soft, icy, fluffy, uncomfortable, damp, like sago, like something unreal—here now and soon gone.

Exercises which appeal to the senses are helpful—like

I have a red rose. It reminds me of
a ball of fire, my mother when she is going out at night,
a beautiful garden, a chemist's shop.

Themes, following upon the reading, e.g., of Kipling's 'Just So Stories' or some Australian Aboriginal Tales, might be helpful in developing the imagination—

How the Giraffe got his long neck (retelling the story)
Why the Moon stays up in the sky
Why kookaburras laugh
Why the ocean is green
Why dogs wag their tails
Why the sea is salty
Why the sky changes from blue to grey
Why cats can see in the dark
Why trees bud in Spring

Comparisons help to make word pictures clear:

Flames wave their hands
turn like springs in a bed
go up and up and die down like an acrobat
are curling, climbing and swaying like a snake

What did the flames look like?

—like water moving
—like snakes curling around
—like licking tongues

What did they make you feel like?

—like someone excited
—like a cosy animal
—like an excited monkey

Other exercises might concern colours, e.g.:

colours I like—what they remind me of
colours I dislike—what they remind me of—how they make me feel

or listening to sounds. Of what sounds do the following remind you?—aeroplanes, blowing of noses, bursting balloons, cheering, clocks ticking, feet along a corridor, hammers banging, laughter, scissors cutting, the piano playing (or other instruments), a saw cutting wood, singing, sounds in buildings, sounds in a lift, on the radio, squeaking of doors, swishing of water, trains, thunder, whistling, the sound of rain and wind.

Class poems can be built from the combined class reactions to appeals to the senses.

Further work might centre around touch—like giving reactions to the feel of ice, velvet, flour, salt, sand, grit, water—or smell and taste. The teacher might collect poems about these senses and reactions to them—poems or descriptions of the whiff of cigars, the fish shop, Sunday meals cooking, the cake shop baking. Children might note differences as well as likenesses in things—exercises commencing with—as soft, hard, smooth, slippery.

In all these activities the aim is to increase children's powers of observation, and to make ideas clearer through the use of analogy.

As children write, there will be the need of a growing ability to spell. The class teacher will compile the weekly spelling work from many sources, and this should help his pupils to become increasingly aware of the way in which words are spelt, but, in written expression, children should be free to ask the spelling of any word which they feel the need to use. If a child is afraid to make errors in spelling he will not write freely and he will often pass over the most appropriate word known to him rather than spell a word incorrectly. The teacher can supply spelling if the pupil asks for it, and children can be encouraged to keep individual word lists for further use.

In programming for written expression, the teacher might discover the interests of the class by setting an initial story of the type—'If I were . . .', 'Doing Things I Like', 'I Wish I Were A . . .', 'Pets', 'Things I Do At Home', 'The People I Like'. Through expressive writing the teacher can come to know and to understand his class.

A glimpse of some poems written by infants school children may be a means of seeing to what extent children use their imagination when they compose their own work in this form. All the efforts followed strong motivation. The influence of literature known to the children will also be noted:

The Air (6 years)
The air is all around us.
All around the world—
but not in space.
When the wind blows
It is just moving air—
that is the only thing you feel—
air.

Hats for Sale
Hats for sale! Hats for sale!
I wonder if I can sell hats today?
Hats for sale! Hats for sale!

(Boy—first grade)
Kitten
Lovely little kitten
Furry and soft,
Run, run, run,
Little kitten run—
Eyes so bright and blue.

The Bees (8 years)
What Is Winter?
Winter comes and Winter goes—
Nobody knows the second.
Winter comes and Winter goes
With an invisible second.
If we knew the second
We would put on our winter clothes.

Motivated by Snow (first grade)
I was walking in the snow with my
kitten.
He said 'Meow, meow, meow!'
I looked around
And saw his little footprints
In the snow.

Snow
Laughing little girl and boy
Walking in the snow.
Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!
Look at them go!

Once the children are encouraged to express themselves in poetic form they will continue to write or to compose orally. How will the teacher evaluate this expressive work? Children's creative expression shows sincerity and a love of word repetition, as well as a sensitiveness to the sounds of words. While some children are more creative than others, it is not necessarily the child who is successful at more formal work who is most successful with creative expression. If the teacher, through giving encouragement and through showing an interest in what is written or composed orally, can develop a child's confidence, then he will discover that he will assist the child in developing fluency of expression, an interest in words and, at the same time, will retain the freshness and the excitement which a child is able to offer when he senses that his work is appreciated. The work begun thus in the infant grades, and developed through primary school classes, will produce at secondary level able, fluent and interested expressionists.

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